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ABSTRACT

Student Expressions of Ethnic and Cultural Harmony in New York City is a program designed to give students in grades 3-6 the opportunity to promote their visions of New York City as a center of harmony and understanding amid a wide range of racial, cultural, religious and linguistic diversity through the arts, both communication and visual. This bulletin contains a selection of expressions, in poetry and prose, by New York City public school students addressing the theme of "My Culture, Our City." (IAH)

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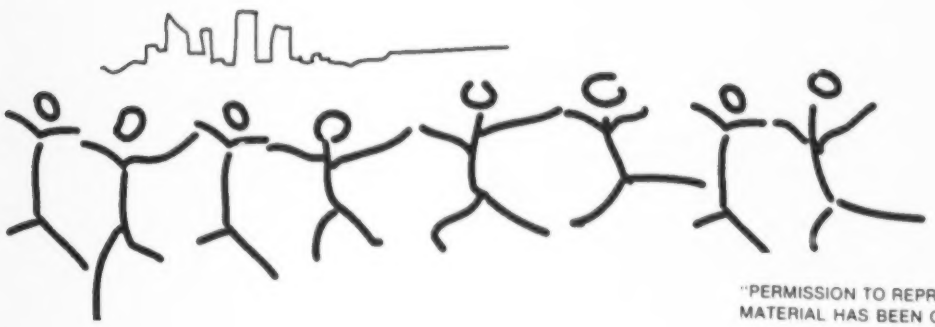

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Joseph A. Fernandez, Chancellor

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Introduction

Student Expressions of Ethnic & Cultural Harmony in New York City is a program designed to give students in grades 3 - 6 the opportunity to promote their visions of New York City as a center of harmony and understanding through the communication and visual arts.

This activity, which began in 1991, is sponsored by: the Foundation for Ethnic Understanding, Rabbi Marc Schneier, President; the City of New York, Hon. David N. Dinkins, Mayor; and the New York City Public Schools, Joseph A. Fernandez, Chancellor.

This bulletin contains a selection of expressions by our New York City Public School students addressing the theme of "My Culture, Our City."

One City, One Culture

I see my world as a rainbow of colors.
People come in many different ways;
all kinds of creatures bring all kinds of surprises
and come in different shapes and sizes.
I have all types of friends
and I know all kinds of people.
I like them and they like me
because we treat each other equally.
I know Puerto Ricans,
Italians, Dominicans,
Chinese and Vietnamese
and many others, I'm sure;
I'm glad that I know them
because they each give me a sense of pride
that I'm not afraid to hide inside.

In my classroom,
I see people every day;
I'm so fascinated by their cultures
I don't know what to say.
I'm Puerto Rican, American and Italian!
I'm so proud
I feel like yelling it out loud!
All the people are different
and yet they're the same;
so we are one city, one culture and one name!

Vanessa Medina
PS 86, CSD 32, Brooklyn
New York City Public Schools • The Foundation for Ethnic Understanding

The Garden We Call Our City

Our city is like a garden.
Each flower has its own color,
each comes from a different seed.
Each one has a different way of growing,
each one has a different way of showing.

I am a flower in this garden.
My culture is my roots.

As a flower needs sun and water to grow,
we can cultivate our flower bed of humanity
by sharing and learning from each other.

Then each flower will flourish,
in the garden we call our city.

Alain Rameau
IS 238, CSD 29, Queens
New York City Public Schools • The Foundation for Ethnic Understanding

THE CITY IS A MOSIAC

The city is a mosiac,
so different and unique,
in sights we see,
sounds we hear
and languages we speak.

If you went around just looking,
seeing all the world,
you'd see the different
people,
men and women, boys and girls.

If the city is a mosiac,
an image of us all,
just hanging on the wall,
we are those little tiles
together every day and night,
joining hands forever,
we happily unite.

Priscilla Fassacesia
PS 71, CSD 8, The Bronx
New York City Public Schools • The Foundation for Ethnic Understanding

My Culture, Our City

Our city—an enormous box of varied colors,
streets full of differences,
different religions, cultures, and races.

Prejudice would be a disgrace.
A personal rainbow in our city
blend of complexions,
with red, brown, yellow, black and white.
Take advantage of this diversity.
Keep this fondly in mind.

Stephanie Chan
P.S. 112, CSD 30, Queens
New York City Public Schools • The Foundation for Ethnic Understanding

My Culture, Our City

I am a Puerto Rican; I am proud to be one, too. All of my family is Puerto Rican, except for my grandfather. There are people who are prejudiced against some Puerto Ricans and they pick fights with them. I am not prejudiced because I know that Puerto Ricans do the same thing. If we could just live together without killing each other, we would make the world a better place. Try to be friendly toward other people, even though they do not believe in the same religion. The world would be a much better place if we lived in harmony.

In our city there are many different cultures. You should like every one of them and learn to live with them, whether black, white, Puerto Rican or Jewish. No one should be prejudiced against anyone. Deep down inside, we are all the same. We should help one another, give each other food and shelter, provide each other with clothing. We all have to try to make our world a better place to live in. Just try to give a little!

We have to love each other!

Anika Agosto
PS 33, CSD 10, The Bronx
New York City Public Schools • The Foundation for Ethnic Understanding

People

Black, red, yellow or white,
every one of us has a right
to be whatever we want to be
whether or not you agree.
I might hate potatoes and peas;
you might like them and say, "More please!"
Your dress may look strange to me
but you may think I look differently.
I might not understand what you say
and maybe when I talk, you might think I come from far away.
Whatever our customs, whatever our name,
we have one thing in common, we're really the same.

Jill Rockwitz
PS 153, CSD 24, Queens
New York City Public Schools • The Foundation for Ethnic Understanding

My Culture, Our City

My culture is Chinese. My culture is different from other people's cultures. When I come home, I take off my shoes and socks and put on my slippers. I eat Chinese food and then watch television.

Many of my classmates are Hispanic. Their culture is different from my culture but we all get along. My classmates and I have learned to share, cooperate and respect one another.

Each culture is like a piece in a puzzle. When it is completed, the puzzle becomes a whole. What's so special is that although we have different cultures, speak different languages and look different from one another, we are all special. The puzzle may be made up of many different colors but when it is put together, it forms a beautiful picture.

Yuk Cheung
PS 123, CSD 32, Brooklyn
New York City Public Schools • The Foundation for Ethnic Understanding

My Culture, Our City

New York is a like a rainbow because it has different cultures from all over the world. It is a city with a lot of people. People come here for a better life.

I am definitely part of that rainbow. My heritage is American and Dominican. My ancestors came to these shores from Africa and Europe, and also include some Native Americans.

Each group from my heritage has greatly contributed to the growth in greatness of America. For this, I am very proud.

Because of the many different cultures in New York City there is so much to learn and do. Our different backgrounds came together and produced a great city, a great state and a great country. So let's get together again and make this city better than it is now.

Harry A. Bradshaw
PS 14, CSD 24, Queens
New York City Public Schools • The Foundation for Ethnic Understanding

My Culture, Our City

African, Jamaican, American, Guyanese; drums, reggae, calypso, soca, rap, hip-hop, house, classical, jazz, ragtime.

Culture is an important thing in our city. Different cultures make up the city. If we did not have different cultures, then some of the stores where we shop, foods that we eat, and clothes that we wear and see wouldn't be here.

New Yorkers need to pay more attention to the different cultures because many people don't accept cultures that are different from their own. This is where crime begins. When a person has a different culture from someone else's and one person does something different, a fight might break out and someone could get hurt or killed.

If we want to live in a peaceful society we need to accept each other for who we are. We should not have to change our culture just because someone doesn't like the way we do things or the way we speak.

My parents are from Caribbean countries. My mother is from the island of Jamaica, and my father is from Guyana. Sometimes when they speak, a Guyanese or Jamaican phrase slips out. When I go to school and I am speaking, an accent or a phrase might slip out too, and my classmates laugh. I feel embarrassed, but I do not get mad because that is a part of my rich culture, and I am not going to change just to please others.

Me

My name is Jennifer and I am African.
I am also Guyanese, Jamaican, and American.
My father is Guyanese,
my mother is Jamaican,
my brother is American,
but what binds us is we are all African.

I am Black and I am proud;
I'll say it once more and very loud.
Some people are prejudiced and don't like people like me,
but I just ignore them and love me for me.

Jennifer Hazlewood
PS 20, CSD 13, Brooklyn
New York City Public Schools • The Foundation for Ethnic Understanding

MY CULTURE, OUR CITY

I am a Spanish girl from El Salvador. I enjoy being in New York City. I like it because I love my friends. When I grow up I want to be a model in the morning, a teacher in the afternoon, and an architect in the evening. I want to work hard because I want to help every New Yorker learn everything about Spanish people. I would like to teach about the Spanish culture to New Yorkers who don't understand my language. I would like all people to love each other because when you picture in your mind people without skin, you see the same soul and heart. I just want peace in the world. I came here because of the war in El Salvador. My grandmother and my mother were so worried about it that we all came to this country. My mother was afraid because my brother was still in El Salvador; now that he is here we want to share with all New Yorkers our stories of the pain and the suffering that people in our country had and to speak on how to prevent it in this country, the United States of America. We came here when I was nine, and I just want to let you know that my mother suffered a lot to bring us to this country; she made so many sacrifices in order to make our lives better and to live peacefully. I love my mother for what she has done for us and I want my mother to be proud of me, like I am of her.

Karla Campos
PS 97, CSD 27, Queens
New York City Public Schools • The Foundation for Ethnic Understanding

My Culture, Our City

As an African-American citizen of New York City, my culture is not only unique but fascinating. We have many great ways of doing things. We do our hair in cornrows, braids and Afros. Most Black Americans wear these hairstyles, but now other cultures and groups wear them, too!

We have great music such as jazz, soul and rap. We eat certain kinds of foods, such as cornbread, fried chicken and collard greens. My culture is not the only one that does these things. Some cultures like to eat the foods we eat, dress the way we dress and listen to the same music.

Most of my friends have different cultures from me, and they enjoy sharing their culture with me as I enjoy sharing with them. My culture can make my city better because we like to share with one another. If we do this all the time we would not have to hurt one another and we could all live in peace and understanding.

As a citizen of New York City I would write a letter to Mr. Mayor and ask him to have a book fair for all the cultures in our city. There would be books about brotherhood and the different races, religions and cultures to share with one another.

Nicole Downs
CIS 147, CSD 9, The Bronx
New York City Public Schools • The Foundation for Ethnic Understanding

My Culture, Our City

There is much hatred in our city today because of ignorance. It's important to give all people a chance no matter what color their skin is or what language they speak. At one time or another we were all foreigners to this land; when my ancestors arrived I am sure they couldn't speak much English either. I try to see people for themselves and never judge anyone. I think it's important to have an open mind and be flexible toward ideas. No one's culture is more important than someone else's.

We're all proud of our heritage and have something to share with others. I'm proud of Italy because of Michelangelo, pizza, and spaghetti; Ireland because of St. Patrick and its beautiful wool sweaters; and my Ukrainian heritage for folk dancing and decorative egg coloring. Unfortunately there are still a lot of racial problems today. There are still certain parts of the city where people may be bothered and sometimes seriously hurt.

I would like to see a special day set aside each year in which every person is required to experience a different culture. They would have to talk, act, think, eat, and do whatever else it takes to be that person. I know this couldn't really happen, but it would be nice to see people try. When we hurt other people we're only hurting ourselves. We are not born with hate, we learn it. It's just as easy to learn peace.

Jennifer Lasky
PS 69, CSD 30, Queens
New York City Public Schools • The Foundation for Ethnic Understanding

Chinese Contributions

Our city is like lots of laces
that are sewn by people of many races.
Chinese culture is part of the thread
that makes our city go ahead.
Chinese restaurants fill the city streets;
we can enjoy many delicious treats.
Chinatown is a place most Chinese are concentrated in
where you can enjoy the Chinese culture with young kin.
Chinatown's variety stores are tourist attractions;
Chinese doctors , teachers and writers of letters,
they help our city work better.
Chinese art is a wonderful sight;
it gives people great delight.
All Chinese-Americans should be proud
because they work so hard to carry their duties out.

Ricky Chin
PS 153, CSD 24, Queens
New York City Public Schools • The Foundation for Ethnic Understanding